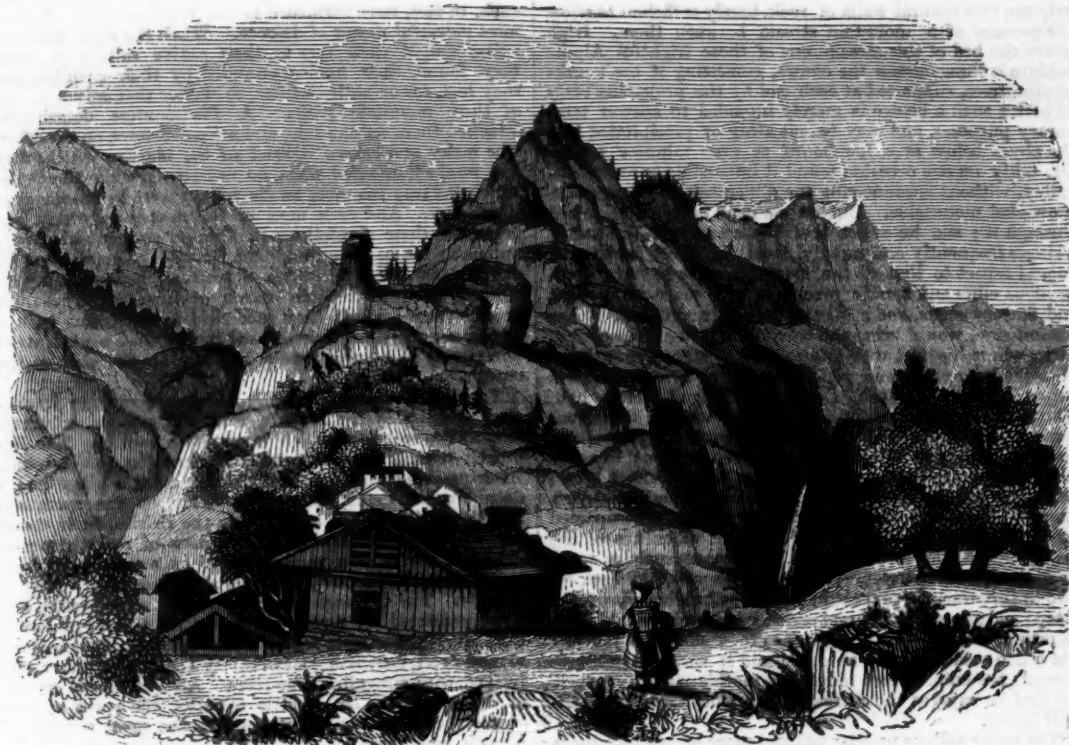




## SOME ACCOUNT OF THE WALDENSES.



THE BALSILLE, OR BACEGLIA. A WALDENSIAN MOUNTAIN-STRONGHOLD.

### II.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE WALDENSIAN VALLEYS, AND THEIR INHABITANTS.

##### SECTION I.

##### GENERAL POSITION AND APPEARANCE OF THE VALLEYS.

In a former Supplement we presented a sketch of the eventful history of the little band of the Waldenses, from the earliest notice which has been handed down respecting them from ancient times, to the year 1840. Let us now take a rapid glance at their valleys, their towns and villages, their churches and church-service, their homes and social arrangements, their personal character and occupations. Our chief authorities for the following details will be the Rev. Dr. Gilly and Dr. Beattie, who have personally visited and described almost every nook of the Waldensian valleys.

These valleys, as we stated in the last article, are situated on the confines of France and Italy, being in the eastern slope of that branch of the Alps which is called the *Cottian*. They form part of the Italian province of Piedmont (a name implying "mountain-foot," and very expressive of the situation of the north-west part of Italy), now owned by the King of Sardinia, whose province of Savoy bounds the valleys in the north. From the town of Rora, the southernmost Waldensian village, to the Col Albergian, the most northern point, the distance measured in a straight line is not much above twenty miles; and the extreme width from east to west is less than twenty. It may seem remarkable that a district so very small should for centuries have been the scene of such exciting events; but it is the

moral power of the inhabitants, and not the importance of the country, which has attracted the attention of Protestant Europe. From the town of Pignerol the whole district may be seen as if spread out before the spectator; there are four different valleys diverging from thence; viz., that of Pragela or Clusone, towards the north, with that of Perouse or St. Martin at its further extremity; on the west the valley of Luzern, of which that of Augrogne is a branch; and on the south that of Rora, the least considerable, but the most elevated of the four. Thus there are the valleys of the Pragela, St. Martin, Luzern, Augrogne, and Rora, which form collectively the "Waldensian Valleys," and in which are situated the towns and villages inhabited by the Waldenses. Minor ridges of mountains separate the valleys one from another, a river flowing along the bed or middle of each valley; while all these streams alike, as well as the ridges which separate them, spring from the lofty Alps which bound the district on the north and west.

The valley of the Luzern, which is described by Dr. Beattie as the most picturesque of the group, consists of a fertile plain, bordered towards the south by verdant meadows dipping gradually into the waters of the river Felice, and in every other direction presenting a rich melange of fruit-trees, vineyards, and corn-fields. The vineyards are particularly luxuriant, and festooned from tree to tree at such a height from the ground as to leave spacious avenues, under shelter of which the oppressive heat of summer is unfelt, the labours of husbandry are carried on, and reapers gather in the rich wheat-harvest. In the season when the vine and mulberry are flourishing, and the peasants are engaged in their field pursuits, the scene is

beautiful in the extreme. The public road, the foot-paths, and fences are generally lined with fruit-trees of various kinds, but chiefly with mulberries, which are preferred by the inhabitants for a reason which we shall state hereafter. As we advance towards La Torre, the capital of the Protestant valleys, the scenery becomes bolder. Richly-wooded hills rise in undulating swells to the right and left; in front the valley, contracting into a defile, shows at intervals the rapid course of the river Felice, by which it is alternately wasted and fertilized.

The valley of St. Martin is more rugged in features, and is more difficult of access than the other valleys. It can only be entered by the passes over the lofty mountains which encircle it, or by Le Pont de la Torre, a defile between two natural walls of rock, barely sufficient to allow the passage of a mountain stream between them. High above the bed of this stream, one of those frightful Alpine bridges is flung across the chasm, consisting of the trunks of pine-trees, supported at each end by the projecting crags of rock; such a bridge is merely intended to answer temporary purposes, and may be cut away or precipitated into the abyss below at a few hours' or even minutes' notice. Dr. Gilly on one occasion found it impossible to enter this valley, without encountering the difficulties and dangers of snow-clad mountains. But on a second occasion he passed through it; and he states that the scenery of the valley changes frequently and rapidly, from the most harsh and rugged aspect to that of the most attractive beauty. Stupendous cliffs and terrific precipices give place to verdant and flowery spots, and a turn of the mountain path, by the torrent side, would bring the traveller out of a deep cleft of rock, where his feet were bruised by the stones, to a bank of lavender or a green plateau of herby grass, soft as a carpet; or to a snug nook, where the corn-land is cultivated. The stream was of the same changing character; its deafening roar almost stunned the traveller in some places, and soon afterwards he would come to a deep still pool of azure blue, again to be succeeded by an impetuous torrent, according to the nature of the chasm through which it flowed. The gentleman just alluded to was accompanied by Mrs. Gilly, who shared with him the difficulties of the passage. On one occasion the path made such a rapid descent, that the pony on which she rode was held back by two or three men, to prevent his tumbling headlong down the steep; and on several different occasions the pony would press so near the edge of the precipices as to render the journey not a little alarming. The guide said it was impossible to prevent the animal from indulging in this singular whim, for that he enjoyed the current of air that came from the gulf below.

The other valleys present features more or less like those of Luzern and St. Martin; and in all of them the inhabitants of this region have shown great industry, and adopted many expedients in appropriating to their use tracts of land stolen from the rocks and the torrents. Where the sides of the mountain would be likely to fall in, they form terrace upon terrace, in many places not exceeding ten feet in breadth, and wall them up with huge piles of stone. Upon these terraces they sow their grain, or plant vines. In the same manner they rob the streams of part of their bed; and when they have brought a small plot of ground to bear, they surround it with an inclosure of stones, and protect it from the violence of the waters. Amidst the ruins of former labours, among black masses of rock, on projecting ridges of the mountain, on the brink of precipices, and on the margin of the torrent, do these indefatigable mountaineers hazard their hopes; and in every possible place, and on the smallest spots where a blade of corn can be made to grow, there they raise a little wheat. It is this extraordinary and indefatigable industry which has partly saved them from being dispossessed of the sterile land, which they are yet suffered to occupy; for if they had been driven out of the country, none would have been found to cultivate such an unprofitable soil, and the great landlords would have gone without their rents, and the government without its taxes. It not unfrequently happens that the bad weather sets in before they have carried home the little corn that can be made to grow, or that the frost and snow cover the ground before they can put in the seed for another crop. In these cases, the men are obliged to leave what little provisions they have for the women and children, and to abandon their homes in search of work and subsistence. They in such case return about Easter, with the scanty pittance they have earned, to satisfy the demand of the tax-gatherer, and to save their cattle and furniture from

being seized. We may remark here, that the tenure upon which land is hired requires that the occupier should pay to the proprietor half the produce of corn and wine "in kind," and half the value of the hay. The indifferent corn-lands yield about five-fold, and the best twelve.

## SECTION 2.

### MOUNTAIN-FASTNESSES AND RETREATS.

In a country situated like the Waldensian valleys, intersected and nearly surrounded by mountains, it may reasonably be expected that there are many elevated posts whereto the inhabitants can retreat in time of danger. Such strongholds are to be found in every mountainous country; and such, in fact, have furnished to the Waldenses one of their most powerful means of defence. When the eight hundred exiles fought their way to their native valleys in 1689, they found their homes occupied by their enemies, and they had, for an entire winter, to shelter themselves in one of these mountain posts. A Piedmontese detachment attacked them on one side, and a French force on the other. The rocky and barren district of St. Martin, which they had reached, afforded them no resources; while the defiles which led into the more fertile valleys were in the hands of the enemy. And even most of the fastnesses, which had protected their forefathers in former persecutions, were untenable for any length of time for want of provisions; for scarcely had they taken up a position, before they were obliged to abandon it in search of supplies. There was one, however, which they succeeded in furnishing with a scanty supply of provisions; and in this they made a stand which defeated every hostile attempt on the part of the enemy.

The fastness here alluded to, represented in our frontispiece, and called the *Balsille*, or *Baceglia*, is as extraordinary as the scenes of which it was the theatre. The approach to this natural fortress is rugged and picturesque. After passing through a wild Alpine tract, a gorge and a deep wooded defile, the valley opens on the mountain hamlet of Macel; and beyond this the *Balsille* itself comes into view. It consists of a conical mass of rocks, rising at the angle where two valleys unite, extremely difficult of access from all but one point, just above the small village of *Balsille*. The approach from this village is very steep, and when protected by strong barricades must have presented difficulties of the most formidable character. It consists of several precipices, rising successively above each other, and fringed with straggling pine-trees. After a casual survey of this mountain, Dr. Beattie remarks, the space appears so confined, and disproportionate to the great number of French and Piedmontese troops brought together for its reduction, that some degree of scepticism is apt to arise in the spectator's mind as to the actual amount of that force. But the records on this subject are supported by authorities which it would be rash to impugn. That so small a body of men ill-provided with all that could be deemed indispensable for successful resistance, should so long have held at bay the combined forces of France and Piedmont, has been treated by some as an extravagant fiction. But that they did so—that a band of exiles, entrenched behind barricades in these rugged encampments, not only maintained their post like an impregnable citadel, but often repulsed the besiegers at the point of the sword, are facts too well established, by the existing records of those who shared in the struggles, to be shaken by any discordant testimony. Here, during a whole winter these exiles prolonged their existence in a manner which approaches the very extreme of human suffering and privation. Sheltered in huts excavated in the rocks—mounting guard—labouring at the fortifications, they were supported by the scanty supply of wheat gathered with great difficulty from under deep snow, the unharvested produce of the fields.

But there is one mountain cave which appears to have been still more extraordinary as a place of refuge. Between the years 1561 and 1686 there were no fewer than sixty-eight edicts put in force against the Waldenses, all of which were intended to exterminate them, and which did waste and reduce them. On every one of these occasions, the sufferers had to flee to the mountains, or to defend themselves more or less from hostile attacks; and on one particular instance three or four hundred of them took refuge in a mountain chasm or cavern absolutely inaccessible to their pursuers. Dr. Gilly, while on his second visit to the valleys, wished to see this cavern; and a party was made up for the purpose. It is situated in the rock or mountain of Castel-



uzzo. The travellers gained the summit of a neighbouring rock, from which they could see Casteluzzo rising almost perpendicularly from the valley beneath. No access whatever can be gained to this rock, except by a narrow connecting ledge only broad enough to admit one at a time, and overhanging the depth below. The party, including Mrs. Gilly, passed over this dangerous Alpine path in safety, and then had to clamber up another height, or rapid slope. After a toilsome ascent, on a rocky path, rendered scorching by the heat of the sun, they came suddenly upon a verdant pasture, which the crest of the mountain had concealed from their view; in fact they had scaled the rampart, and were at once transported to an amphitheatre of rich grass, where cows and sheep were grazing. After many ineffectual attempts to discover the cavern or retreat, they were about to desist; when the guide said there was a lower entrance to it, which he thought they could attain. He took them to the edge of a precipice, which overlooked the face of the cliff where the cavern was said to be situated; and he directed them to look down the rock, which was for some hundred feet as perpendicular as a wall, and pointed to a spot he pronounced to be the mouth of the cavern. On an expression of incredulity how so many persons could have gained access to such a retreat by such means, he explained that the descent was achieved by stooping over the projecting crag, and catching hold of the rough points of the cliff, so as to let themselves down till they came to a sort of chimney or tunnel, by which they further descended into the cavern itself. The women and children he supposed to have reached the cavern by the entrance which they had unsuccessfully tried to discover above.

Dr. Gilly gave up any further attempt at that time; but before he left the country he succeeded in visiting this extraordinary place of retreat. Six men formed the party, of whom two had in early youth visited the cavern. They were provided with a strong rope-ladder, a spade, a pick-axe, hatchets, lanterns, and cords; and proceeded to the precipitous rock before mentioned, on the face of which the cavern was said to be situated, far down from the brink. The two guides then pulled off their shoes, stockings, and upper garments; and were joined by two young peasants, who volunteered to accompany them in their perilous descent. The whole four then descended the almost perpendicular cliff, clinging to such projecting ledges as happened to lie in their way. Such was the abruptness of the descent, that those above speedily lost sight of them; but in a short time voices were heard from below, directing those above to lower the rope-ladder, which had been previously fastened to a fragment of rock. The ladder was let down, and fastened to the rock beneath; and Dr. Gilly and his brother descended. They found the descent by the ladder more difficult than dangerous; yet they could not find themselves thus suspended between heaven and earth, by a swinging staircase of rope, which the sharp points of the rock might cut in two, without feeling rather unpleasant sensations. The ladder did not hang straight, but followed the irregular lines of the face of the cliff, which had given hand and foot-hold to the peasants, who led the way. At the depth of about twenty feet the ladder rested against a sort of shelf. From this shelf it hung in an angular direction, and next lay along a rough sloping ridge, like a camel's back; and then depended perpendicularly, rocking with great violence. About fifty feet from the top, there was a second shelf, from which descended in an oblique direction a sort of chimney or tunnel into the cliff, terminating in the cavern.

This cavern Dr. Gilly found to be an irregular, rugged, sloping gallery, in the face of the rock, of which the jutting crags above formed the roof. At one end also there was a projection of cliff, which sheltered it on that side from the weather. The gallery is wide enough to be secure. In some parts the edge overhangs the depth below perpendicularly; at others it shelves gently downwards; but in all directions it quite inaccessible except from above and down the tunnel, which will only admit one person at a time. Some shrubs and rock plants grow in the gallery, which in some degree shelter it from the south, to which in other respects it is entirely open. The term cavern does not exactly apply to it; it does not penetrate deep enough into the rock, and it is perfectly light in every part. There were many difficulties in reconciling the appearance and situation of this cavern with the accounts which had been given of the asylum afforded to three or four hundred persons; but the tradition prevailed strongly amongst the peasantry, and Dr. Gilly found too many corroborative circumstances to allow him to disbelieve the statement of this being the spot

in question. It may be remarked here, as Dr. Gilly observes, that the credibility of the accounts handed down, respecting the achievements of the Waldensers in the mountains, will be more readily conceded when we consider the difficulties which their enemies had to overcome in assailing them. Many of the assailants were unused to mountain combats, and all of them impeded rather than assisted by the rules of regular warfare. They were embarrassed by the impossibility of keeping in their ranks, of supporting or being supported by their comrades. An ambuscade was ready to receive them in every thicket, by peasants who understood every kind of furtive annoyance. If they crossed a ravine, they were assailed from above by all sorts of missiles. If they arrived at a defile or narrow pass, the hardy few who defended it, prompt at shifting their ground, had nothing to do but to dispute their advance, as long as their strength was equal to the struggle, and then to retreat and rally at the next spot, which they might consider more defensible. When the troops attempted to push boldly up a slippery steep, they were attacked with stones set in motion by the slightest touch, and rolling everything before them. After they had scaled one height, they often found to their dismay that a succession of such impediments had to be surmounted: no level gained, no position occupied, to put an end to their toils. The peasantry, if forced to yield one point, instantly made for another, and the weary pursuer discovered that his strength and his spirits were exhausted, without anything more to boast of as the price of his toils, than a few hovels, which had already been abandoned by their inhabitants, and ransacked of their miserable contents. In fact, the mountaineer, in his wild mode of warfare, relinquishes his post the moment he finds it untenable, and then leads his foe a wearisome chase from ridge to ridge, till whole battalions are disorganized, and reduced to the necessity of retreating, or of continuing the contest with the certainty of defeat.

### SECTION 3.

#### COTTAGES—DOMESTIC ARRANGEMENTS.

Let us now leave the mountains, and glance at the towns and villages of the Waldensian valleys. The principal town (or perhaps we ought to say village) is called by the Italians La Torre, and by the French La Tour, herein resembling every other place in the district, which has two names, according as it is mentioned in one or other of the two languages; thus, we have Balsille and Baceglia, St. Jean and San Giovanni, St. Martin and St. Martino, &c. The first appearance of La Torre gives a more favourable idea than a closer inspection will permit the traveller to form. The two bridges that are built over a torrent at its entrance, a water-mill, a church seen on the right, and the ruins of an old castle appearing among the trees on a neighbouring height, give a picturesque appearance to the place. But the street, of which the village mainly consists, is narrow and disagreeable, and the houses poorly constructed. The broadest part is called the "Place" or Square de la Torre; the principal building in which is a long heavy-looking edifice, still called the "Palace," once the habitation of the Counts de la Torre, but now occupied in tenements. The church is rather a large building, and stands upon a very picturesque eminence, surrounded by trees and vineyards, and at a distance of about a mile from the village; the rising ground on which it is built bursts abruptly towards the north and west, into rocky eminences, and these into lofty crags and towering mountains, some of which protrude so far from the base, that they look as if they would inevitably fall and overwhelm everything below them.

The village of Anagnina enabled Dr. Gilly, in his first excursion in 1823, to witness the domestic arrangements of a humble Waldensian home, where simplicity and comparative poverty went hand in hand. The village or hamlet is situated on a mountain side, around which cows and goats, mules and asses, were allowed to roam. Dr. Gilly and his party were anxious to have a closer view of one of the cottages forming the hamlet. One of these was built very high up the side of the mountain; constructed of coarse stone, uncemented for the most part, but having a little clay or mud to keep together the loose materials, and exclude the wind on the side most exposed to the weather. There were neither chimney nor glazed windows; and the upper chambers were entered by a ladder and gallery. The eaves or roof projected all round so as to form a sort of shelter outside.

As the visitors approached this cottage (which seemed to be one of the best in the hamlet) they heard the voices of

children; and upon opening the door of the lower part a strange medley displayed itself. Immediately on the right from the entrance, was an infant in a cradle, and near it a circle of half a dozen children, neatly dressed, and of cleanly appearance, who were repeating their catechism to a young girl apparently about twelve years of age. On the left were seen a cow, a calf, two goats, and four sheep, and the motley group of living creatures helped to keep each other warm. It was the common sleeping chamber of them all; for leaves and straw generally compose the bed of these simple peasants. The older girl held in her hand Ostervald's Catechism, in French, from which she was instructing her young companions; for though a *patois* of Italian is still the common dialect of the province, all the children of the Waldenses are taught French, because their books of instruction are in that language.

It may appear a strange thing, to those accustomed to European habits, that children, cows, calves, goats, and sheep, should be thus huddled together in one room, and yet that the children should exhibit a degree of intelligence, which we fear English peasants cannot generally equal. But this appears to have been a characteristic of the Waldenses for many ages; for De Thou, who wrote more than two centuries and a half ago, thus speaks of this singular people:—"Their houses are constructed of flint-stone, with a flat roof covered with mud, which being spoiled or loosened by rain, they smooth again with a roller. *In these they live with their cattle*, separated from them, however, by a fence; they have besides two caves set apart for particular purposes, in one of which they conceal their cattle, in the other themselves, when hunted by their enemies. Poor as they are, they are content, and live separate from the rest of mankind. One thing is astonishing, that persons externally so wild and rude should have so much moral cultivation. They can all read and write. They understand French, so far as is needful for the understanding of the Bible, and the singing of Psalms. You can scarcely find a boy among them, who cannot give you an intelligible account of the faith which they profess." It is most remarkable that the practice and position of these people should at the present day so closely correspond with this account, notwithstanding the vicissitudes which the intervening ages have brought about.

But to return. After the visitors had listened a few minutes to the instruction which the young peasant girl was giving to her little brothers and sisters, they mounted to the upper part of the cottage, in which they found the father and mother. The apartment was about twenty feet square, and offered a sight only a little less curious than that below. Here was a variety of articles of household use, not lying carelessly about, but sorted and disposed each in its proper place; there were cleanly and well-scoured vessels for milk, cheese-presses and churns, and a few wooden platters and bowls. There were also several implements of husbandry, spinning-wheels, and a large frame for weaving; for almost everything that is worn by these cottagers is made at home. On a crate, suspended from the ceiling, were fourteen large black loaves of bread. Bread, it appears, is an unusual luxury among them, but the owner of this cottage was of a condition something above the generality. He had a few acres of his own, and his industry and good management had enabled him to provide a winter supply of bacon and flour.

The other cottages which the visitors entered were of an inferior kind, and had but few of those little comforts with which we in England desire to see the poorest supplied; and it was quite astonishing to compare the very rude and insufficient accommodations of these people, with their civility and information. In their mode of herding together under a roof which is barely waterproof, they are far behind our own peasantry; but in mental advancement they are, to the disgrace of England be it told, far ahead.

#### SECTION 4.

##### CHURCHES—PASTORS—RELIGIOUS SERVICE.

When we consider that the Waldenses have for nine hundred years suffered persecutions on account of the firmness with which they have maintained their religious opinions, it becomes a subject of great interest to watch them in their religious duties. Dr. Gilly and Dr. Beattie have both spoken with great pleasure of the church service as witnessed in the valleys. The latter, speaking of a Sunday visit to the church of La Torre, says:—"Through the various avenues, intersecting the acclivities, and opening

upon this venerable temple, the village population was observed slowly proceeding to the calm celebration of the day of rest. The patriarch with his sons, the matron with her daughters, the master with his household—all with that air of cheerful and unaffected piety which so eminently distinguished the various groups as they passed—met and exchanged salutations, where the present temple, their noblest monument, rises over the graves of the dead—and with its green inclosure might have served as an original for the well-known 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard.' The interior of the church is plain in design and execution, and offers nothing that can divert the attention from the solemn and impressive service to which it is devoted. It is a tabernacle of which the fastidious architect perhaps would be ashamed, but which the humble piety of the Vaudois (Waldenses) has invested with a sanctity which all the vain accessories of art could never bestow. It corresponds with that simplicity of primitive worship which they profess, and needs not the foreign aid of ornament to awaken those feelings which can alone harmonize with the house of prayer. M. Peyran, the able and zealous pastor of La Torre, in the several divisions of the sermon, evinced a thorough acquaintance with his subject, and that persuasive eloquence in its treatment and exposition, which enlist the hearers on the side of truth, and make curiosity subservient to edification. In a brief allusion to the pestilence with which the valleys were then threatened, he found an impressive topic for illustrating the frail tenure of existence, and of bringing home to every bosom the necessity of being 'also ready.' . . . . . The music which filled up the intervals in the day's service, was little indebted to the science of modern composition; but it was a song in which all present seemed to join with one heart, and in the fine choral swell which followed, shewed the vast superiority of the human voice over those instruments which have too generally usurped its place in the sanctuary." Dr. Gilly similarly records the pleasure with which he visited the church of La Torre. He says, that in passing through the town, everything that he saw reminded him of what he had been accustomed to in England on a Sabbath day; so unlike the usual appearance of towns on the Continent. Silence and decency prevailed in the streets, smartness in the dress, and cleanliness in the countenance of the rustics. Even the clean close caps of the female peasantry resembled those of the villagers of Suffolk; and when he reached the churchyard, the comparison was still more striking, for the villagers were assembled before the church door, waiting for the clergyman, who had not yet come.

The general affairs of the Waldensian church are regulated by a synod, which cannot be held but with consent of the government, and consists of thirteen pastors, and one elder from each parish. The *Moderator*, who presides at the synod, and is the primate of the church, is elected by this assembly; but he must be formally approved by the king before he can enter upon his office. It is the synod also which appoints a pastor to a vacant charge; the parish which loses a minister nominates two or three candidates, and the general assembly chooses the most worthy. It will be thus seen that the church partakes of the presbyterian character of that of Scotland, more than the episcopal of England. It seems, however, that the Waldensian church was formerly episcopal, that is, governed by a bishop; but it is not known when, or under what circumstance, the change was made. At the latter end of the sixteenth century the head of the church was called "Moderator," as at present. Each church, by its own consistory, composed of minister, deacon, and elders, manages its own affairs in ordinary matters, and receives the sanction of the synod in those of more importance.

The liturgy and pastoral duties may be understood from the following details of a visit which Dr. Gilly paid to one of the churches. The hour of commencing the public service was nominally nine o'clock; but the minister did not enter the church till some time afterwards; his place being supplied for the time by the village school-master, called the "regent." This regent read two chapters from the Bible, with the reflections of Ostervald annexed to them. The pastor then entered, and opened his book of prayer (the old liturgy of Geneva), and the order of service proceeded as follows, very impressively on the part of the minister, and with corresponding devotion on that of the congregation. 1. A short exhortation to confession. 2. A form of supplication and confession combined. 3. A Psalm sung. 4. Prayer before the Sermon; extempore or precomposed. 5.



The Sermon, preached from memory. 6. A long form of prayer for all orders of men, for persons in authority especially. 7. The Lord's Prayer. 8. The Apostles' Creed. 9. A Psalm sung. 10. A benedictory address, and exhortation to almsgiving. 11. The final thanksgiving. The whole of the service occupied about an hour and a half. The afternoon service, which is short, is performed by the regent, whose regular office it is to read the Scripture lessons of the morning, to lead the psalmody, and to read the prayers in the afternoon: to read also a public service on Thursdays, and to deliver a word of exhortation at funerals.

The liturgies now in use in the Waldensian Church are those which the inhabitants have adopted in consequence of their connexion with Switzerland, into which connexion they have been drawn by having no institution of their own for the theological education of their candidates for orders, and no libraries except the small private collections of individuals, and by their inability to obtain any religious books, conformable with the Protestant faith, except such as are in the French language. It has, however, been pretty clearly proved that at one time they had a liturgy of their own, independent of any neighbouring church; and proposals have been recently made to them to make some changes in the existing liturgy, with a view to the introduction of some of the features of the beautiful liturgy of the Church of England.

The morning service is the only duty which the pastors have to fulfil within the church; but their pastoral charge is, in other respects, exceedingly laborious. The preparation for delivering their sermons from the pulpit by memory, is more or less burthensome according to their several abilities; but the duty of visiting the sick and aged presses hard on all of them, especially those who dwell in the more mountainous parishes. There, the conscientious pastor's work is never ended. His labour increases with his zeal; the earnestness of his exhortations renders the object of his spiritual concern more desirous of seeing him again and again, and he himself is proportionably moved to further exertions. Dr. Gilly, on asking for information on these points from several pastors, received several answers, from which he gives extracts, shewing the purity and singleness of heart with which these christian duties are fulfilled. In one of these answers the pastor says:—"One of my most precious and pleasing occupations is to visit those who are confined to their homes by age or illness; not only when I am summoned, but whenever I think I can put in a word of consolation, I hasten to the discharge of this sacred duty. In general, the salubrity of the air, and the simple life which my people lead, keep the numbers low on the sick list; but these causes, on the other hand, increase the ranks of the aged, and give me enough to do; for, as you well know, many of the habitations are at such a distance from my presbytery, that it is no easy task to make my rounds so often as I ought." Another says: "My Church is composed of hamlets far distant from each other, and many of them high up in the acclivities of the mountain; nevertheless I feel it to be a sacred duty, and dear to my heart, to obey every summons, at whatever hour, or under whatever circumstances they may be made, and to hasten to the side of those who desire the presence and consolation of their friend and pastor. I hope I myself profit upon such occasions. I endeavour not to lose the influence which is invariably gained after such visits."

From Christmas to Whitsunday, the pastors deliver a sermon on Thursdays. They are also engaged in the solemn preparation for the reception of communicants at the Sacrament, which occurs four times in the year, and which occupies about eight weeks of the pastor's time. They likewise visit every hamlet at least once in the course of the year, to assemble all the inhabitants for the purpose of questioning them as to their spiritual condition and wants. In addition to these duties, to the church service and to visiting the sick, they superintend weekly catechising, both in the church and the presbytery. Yet with all this they are so poor, that they have in some instances to eke out their scanty subsistence with daily labour, being prevented from taking the office of schoolmasters by the utter impossibility of devoting sufficient time to it.

On one occasion Dr. Gilly heard a sermon preached on the top of the mountain by one of the pastors, to the herdsmen, shepherds, and their families, who were depasturing their cattle on that spot. The party took up their abode at a little mountain inn on the previous night; and the intel-

ligence of the approaching sermon brought many additional persons from the French, as well as the Italian, side of the mountain. As the morning was threatening, the clouds low, and the wind high, the service was performed in a large granary, instead of in the open air, as was customary in such mountain preachings. At nine o'clock, a man ascended to the roof of the little inn, and blew a long and loud blast with a conch-shell; this he repeated at half past nine, and at ten, and was on each occasion heard at a great distance. After the first blast, people were seen approaching from different quarters; and this picturesque gathering continued for more than an hour. The service then commenced, and was listened to, and joined in, with the most impressive earnestness; the pastor taking the text of his sermon from the appropriate verse "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"—ISAIAH lii., 7.

## SECTION 5.

### SCHOOLS—EDUCATION.

The schools at which the children of the Waldenses receive their education are of different kinds, according to the funds by which they can be supported. The public schools are classified as *Great Schools*, *Small Schools*, and *Grammar Schools*. The great schools may be deemed parish or district schools, and the smaller schools as hamlet or village schools. All these schools are directed by schoolmasters, some of whom speak French tolerably well, and write a pretty good hand; but in general they neither speak French well, nor write well. They all read French, but have a very imperfect knowledge of that language. The greater part of them are in the habit of speaking *patois*, and there are no means of learning French grammatically in the valleys. They can all cipher a little, but have no books of arithmetic, slates, or slate-pencils.

The schoolmasters teach reading, both in the district and the hamlet schools, by means of a small spelling-book called a *Carte*, and by similar means teach their pupils to read Ostervald's Catechism, the New Testament, and the Bible. They set copies on detached sheets of paper in round and small hand, and sums in the four first rules of arithmetic from memory; these the children work out also on sheets of paper. But it often happens that this mode of teaching is too expensive for the parents, so that the children are greatly delayed from want of writing paper. The children are in general arranged in the school in classes; the master sets a lesson to each child, and the whole of the scholars come up to him in succession—a system by which, as is now well known in England, much valuable time is wasted.

The Waldenses must not be blamed for the many defects observable in the system of education, for they are prohibited, by an edict of government, from having any Committee of their own for the regulation of public instruction, and from using any system of mutual instruction. Colonel Beckwith, who spent some time amongst them, and took much pains to ascertain the social condition of the peasantry, says:—"Other systems of education, if they were permitted, would bring on the children much faster; but in the present state of the country, and of the population, it would be difficult to carry them into effect. The greatest defect of the present system is, that the means used to teach French do not effect the object so as to enable the population to read and listen to the Scriptures with the profit that is desirable. There does not appear to be any immediate remedy for this; first, on account of the expense of forming masters, the want of means to pay these masters, and the difficulty of teaching a foreign language to peasants who are occupied in supplying their daily wants in a country where there are no books written in the dialect spoken by its inhabitants. The wants of these schools are New Testaments, slates, and slate-pencils: of the latter there are none in Piedmont, and they might probably be supplied cheapest from England, by way of Genoa."

The Dutch have been great friends to the Waldenses; not only interceding for them when persecution threatened them, but furnishing them with funds to assist in purchasing books, increasing the stipends of the pastors, and maintaining schools. There is a yearly allowance from Holland towards the support of the district schools, varying from fifty to a hundred and fifty francs each, and from twelve to fifty francs for each of the hamlet schools. These stipends

to the masters are increased by some small contribution from each commune. The greatest payment which is made to any of the masters of the district schools, is four hundred francs or sixteen pounds per annum, which includes his salary as catechist and reader in the church. Some of the masters of the hamlet schools live with the inhabitants, of the hamlets in which they teach, one day in one cottage, one day in another; so miserably insufficient are their stipends.

Dr. Gilly visited the schools at a period which showed how difficult it is to keep the children of a labouring population at study at the time when field occupations are active. The small schools, about a hundred in number, were for the most part closed, and the district schools were held very irregularly, owing to the absence of the children, who were principally occupied in the fields and mountain pasturages, tending the flocks and herds, or collecting the produce of the silk-worms. Dr. Gilly, however, entered one of the school-rooms, where he found twenty-two boys and girls present, varying from seven to sixteen years of age. In the months when the attendance is most regular, the numbers in this school (the district school of La Torre) amounted to a hundred or even a hundred and thirty. One boy was busy with a sum in the rule of three. A little girl eight years of age was reading tolerably well in the Catechism; but it appeared that the child did not quite understand the meaning of the French language in which she was reading, while the master was not competent to explain it to her in her native patois,—another instance of the unfortunate position in which the Waldenses are placed in respect to language.

The distinction between district schools and hamlet schools arises out of the exigencies of the inhabitants. Each commune or parish has its school, but many of the hamlets forming the commune are situated so far up the mountain sides that the children of the peasantry would get no education at all unless they could obtain it near home. Thus it arises that each hamlet has its own school. Parents would prefer to send their children to the larger schools, but circumstances compel them to the adoption of another alternative. The hamlet schools are usually conducted by some of the better educated peasantry, who think they are well paid if they receive twenty or twenty-five francs for their labour during about four months in the year—the utmost that the children can be spared from field-employments. In the district of La Torre these hamlet schools number from twelve to fifty scholars each. The school-rooms are small and cheerless, for the most part unglazed, having paper instead of glass, with scarcely any desks or seats; and warmed by rude stoves or grates which fill them with smoke.

A school of a higher character, called the *Grammar School*, has been established in the valleys. Some such school as that has been maintained, with more or less of interruption, for many ages, and has been principally supported by contributions from the Protestant States of Europe, especially Holland. Still the funds for its support were exceedingly scanty; and it seemed likely to fall into oblivion, when, about a dozen years ago, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel arranged to furnish a small yearly allowance for the support of the school. Shortly after the arrangement had been made, Dr. Gilly, in his second residence at the valleys, paid a visit to the school, which he did not expect to find conducted very efficiently, since the master received but thirty-five pounds per annum for instructing the scholars in Latin, Greek, and Sacred Literature; out of which small stipend, too, he had to pay rent for his habitation and school-room. The school was, however, very creditably conducted. It consisted of twenty-two boys, varying from nine to fifteen years of age. They were divided into five classes, in different stages of progress, from the Latin Grammar and Latin Sentences, to the works of Cicero, Virgil, and Horace.

All the schools which we have mentioned, except the Grammar School, are attended by girls as well as boys; but efforts have been made towards the establishment of girls' schools, on the principle that it is better for each sex to be educated separately. Four girls' schools have been established by funds managed by a London Committee, and subscribed from various quarters; while four others are maintained by private individuals. Dr. Gilly visited one of the former class, and found the school-mistress to be the daughter of a neighbouring farmer. The school-room was large, airy, and cheerful; and the scholars were all busily employed, some marking, others knitting, and others read-

ing from the New Testament. The prejudices of the people, who seemed to prefer the old plan of sending their daughters to the district and hamlet schools, had not yet worn off; and Mr. Gilly accounts for that prejudice thus:—"It is supposed here that female teachers are not so competent to instruct as the masters. The very great poverty which is experienced in some of the families, occasions an inability to provide their children with the materials for work in the girls' school, without which it would be useless to send them. This will in future be obviated in part, by an allowance made by the London Committee, for the express purpose of supplying the schools with these materials. There is some reluctance also arising out of the superior neatness and cleanliness exacted of those who now attend. The appearance of the scholars of the girls' school, being somewhat above that of the generality of children, makes the ill-provided ashamed of joining their ranks. These objections will wear off in the course of time: the good example and habits of attention to personal and household neatness will spread by degrees, and the great advantage will be appreciated of having their young females instructed in a manner more becoming their sex, and in being directed at an early age to the study of things necessary to make them useful to their families. In a rustic and mountain-population, like that of the Vaudois, these considerations are commonly too much neglected, and the peculiar training which girls ought to receive is left to chance. It was to correct this evil, and to give them opportunities which they had never before enjoyed, that these new institutions were devised."

The regulations by which these girls' schools are governed, are chiefly as follow. The mistresses must be qualified to teach reading, writing, needlework, knitting, and the works necessary to the duties of the sex; for which they receive three hundred francs (12*l.*) a year. The number of pupils conveniently admissible at each school, is supposed to be twenty-five, but it is not strictly limited. All classes of children are eligible for admission, but none is received without the approbation of the pastor. The children of the villages and hamlets in the vicinity of those where the schools are held, are admissible. In Summer, the school hours are from eight to eleven, and from one to four; in the Winter, from nine to twelve, and from one to three. The school routine begins and ends with prayer every day. One child reads a portion of Scripture, while the others are engaged in needlework. The work of one day in the week is devoted to the benefit of the hospital or dispensary, the materials for such work being provided out of the funds whereby the school itself is supported.

#### SECTION 6.

##### PRODUCTIVE INDUSTRY.

The preceding details will have prepared us to expect, that among a people circumstanced as the Waldenses are, productive industry is not in a very developed state; that is, that although they may produce the food on which they live, they have little of that or of anything else to barter or sell to other countries.

The most important article of produce, considered in a commercial point of view, is that of silk, by the rearing of the silk-worm; an occupation very extensively carried on in Piedmont, of which these valleys form a part. To those who are not acquainted with the economy of this little insect, it may be well to explain one or two circumstances which will illustrate some of the domestic arrangements of the Waldenses. The eggs of the silk-worm produce their larvæ about the end of April or the beginning of May. By good management it is possible to accelerate the development of the worm, by placing the eggs in a stove-room, the temperature of which is raised gradually in the course of twelve days from 64° to 82°. The egg is about the size of a small pin's head; and when the animal first issues from the shell, it measures about one-fortieth of its full-grown length. It undergoes five changes or moultings, and in a month it has attained its full size, and the rapid increase of one-fifth of an ounce, or ninety-five times its own weight, from the time it came from the egg. The remarkable fact has been ascertained that the silk-worm consumes in thirty days more than an ounce of leaves, or five times its own weight when at the greatest size. This voraciousness not only renders the silk-worm an expensive and difficult animal to rear, unless the supply of food is ample, but exposes it to diseases which often prove fatal. Hence in years when the leaves of the



mulberry-tree (the food of the silk-worm) are scanty or of a bad quality, the peasants lose their stock, or secure it at a heavy cost, and are disappointed in one of their principal hopes. Twelve pounds weight of leaves are required to feed the number of worms necessary to produce one pound weight of silk cocoons (little balls into which the worm forms the silken substance); and the expense of procuring these is sometimes nearly as much as the poor cottager receives for the silk.

Another drawback is, that the temperature which the silk-worms require is such as a Waldensian cottage cannot often afford. In fact, such nice attention and unremitting care are needful to reap the harvest, when the worms are performing their last operation, that the cottagers keep watch night and day to prevent any mishap, and to secure the cocoon at the precise time when it is completely formed. When the worm has attained a working state, he begins forming the cocoon whence all our silk is produced, and completes the process in about eight or ten days. Then comes the critical time. When the animal is supposed to have finished, he will become torpid, and the silk balls are removed from the branches or frames to which they had been attached, and exposed to a degree of heat which will kill the insect; otherwise, he will recover his energies after a short interval, and damage the silk by working a hole out of his prison-house.

On such an occasion as this, when a cottager has succeeded in rearing his worms to the point when the cocoons are fit for gathering and preparing for the market, a sort of harvest-home and scene of joyful industry occurs: his friends and neighbours come to felicitate him upon the occasion, and to assist the family in collecting and preparing the cocoons for the market. A frame-work of fagots or brushwood forms the ground on which the cocoons are fixed by the worms; and from this frame-work they are now removed and brought to the farm-yard, where they are picked and sorted by a lively group seated in a circle, whose occupation it is to separate them from the outer web or film, and throw them so cleansed into one large basket. Generally speaking, the growers sell them in this state, receiving about a franc and a quarter, more or less according to quality, per pound.

The process of "filature," by which the silk is wound off from the cocoons and presented in the form of a continuous thread, is generally effected by persons who purchase from many different growers. This is effected by throwing the cocoons into water nearly boiling hot, and keeping them in constant agitation. The ends are then detached from the balls by means of wisps of birch or rice-straw, and are gradually wound off by machinery upon a reel, which, uniting the fibres of four or five balls into one, forms a skein of sufficient strength and thickness. The single threads, as drawn out from the cocoons, are by far too fine and delicate for use; and the skill of the reeler depends upon the nicety with which he joins the fibre of one cocoon to that of another at the proper place, for the fibre diminishes greatly in thickness towards the end.

The establishments in which this last-named operation is carried on are sometimes very considerable, and are called (as well as or after the process itself) *filatures*. Bernoulli, who described the Waldensian valleys some years ago, says:—"Very near Lucerna are two villages, the one called St. Jean, the other La Tour. In the last I saw one of the most considerable filatures in Italy; the quantity of cocoons, as they informed me, amounted to two thousand rous, or fifty thousand pounds weight per annum, and the filature of these cocoons lasts till the end of September. I remarked that they turned the wheel with the foot, and not with the hand, as I have seen in other filatures, by means of a handle which they turn alternately first with one hand and then with the other. The advantage which they have here in turning with the foot, and not with the hand, consists not only in their moving the reel more rapidly, but in directing the movement which acts upon the cocoon, and of stopping it when necessary."—Unfortunately the Waldenses have been since deprived of this large establishment, which used to employ hands enough to reel fifty thousand pounds weight of silk in the year. The principal filature is now removed from La Tour to Pignerol or Pinerolo, just without the Waldensian district, in another province of Piedmont. We may remark that it was from somewhere in this part of Italy that Sir Thomas Lombe brought over to England the mode of silk-filature, which was before his time entirely unknown in England.

The agricultural labours of the peasantry are confined to

the raising of sufficient food for themselves and families, and this is often miserably deficient. They seldom suffer the ground to lie fallow; and the most general rotation is—wheat for two years, and maize the third. The land is well manured from time to time, and the corn is usually sown in August and September, and cut in June. In the vale of San Giovanni, and a few other favoured spots, hay is cut three times in the year. The animals reared are sheep, goats, cattle, and a very few horses. The ploughing, where the plough can be used, is done with the assistance of oxen; but in the higher districts, and in rocky soils, where the plots of corn-land are very confined and bordering upon the precipices, most of the field-labour is done with the spade and hoe.

The general state of the peasantry as to agriculture and trade, cannot be well understood without referring to the restrictions under which they labour, and the disadvantages against which they have to contend. If we take the state of 1823 as a representative of the present state (and we believe that, on the whole, these restrictions are not now less than at the former period) the following will give an idea of the subject. No Protestant can inherit or purchase land beyond the limits of the rivers Clusone and Felice, two only of those which flow through the valleys; and thus the majority of the villagers are deprived of that stimulus which the possession of a little landed property gives to agricultural pursuits. No one of the Waldenses may practice as a physician, a surgeon, apothecary, attorney, or advocate, except among his own community, and within very narrow limits; even in the communes of the three most favoured valleys, there must not be a majority of Protestants, that is, the officers of the valleys must number more Catholics than Protestants; although the latter are in some of the districts forty to one of the former. The Protestants are obliged to observe the festivals of the Catholics, and to abstain from work on those days: an excessive hardship, for there is one holiday at least every week, and sometimes two or three; so that the Protestant peasant has only from three to five days per week for labour. A poor Waldense has sometimes to pay a fine for irrigating his little meadow on a Catholic saint-day. Fifteen sous a day in the winter, and thirty in summer, are the utmost that a peasant can earn, even when these forced holidays are fewest; and he can often procure only bread of the coarsest kind, potatoes, and chesnuts, with the fruit of his earnings. Shut out from military, and civil employments, and from the learned professions, the Waldenses are necessarily confined within most vexatious limits, and even there the restrictions bear hardly on them. There are one or two small establishments for the woollen manufacture, for tanning, and for charcoal-burning; and these constitute, with the silk culture, the sum of Waldensian trade.

#### SECTION 7.

##### MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

We will throw together, in the concluding section of our subject, a few miscellaneous particulars which do not properly belong to the preceding sections.

The inhabitants of these valleys, it has been remarked, bear in their features the expression of their history—of the sufferings to which they have so long been victims, as well as of those arduous struggles in which they have been victors. The men are generally tall, robust, and well made, and improve their physical gifts by laborious occupations in the fields, or by hunting. Their frank and manly character, their unaffected hospitality, and exemplary conduct in all the degrees and ties of mutual relationship, their grateful recollection of their benefactors, their loyalty and patriotism, and the moderation they observe in speaking of their former sufferings, are conspicuous features of their moral character. As an instance of the latter, one of the Waldenses told Dr. Gilly that his father would not allow him to open or read, until he was twenty-four years of age, *Leger's History of the Persecutions of the Waldenses*, a work which detailed, from the personal observation of the author, the terrible sufferings which the Waldenses experienced in the latter half of the seventeenth century: the father was fearful lest the recital should engender bitter feelings towards his Catholic neighbours, in the breast of his son.

Those crimes which require the punishment of the civil magistrate are of rare occurrence. A stranger may pass through their country by day or night without the fear of molestation. Many of the inhabitants reach an advanced age, often as much as ninety years; and this notwithstanding the severe toil whereby they gain their daily bread,—

being compelled sometimes to raise walls to prevent the earth from being washed down by the rain—to break up the soil by manual labour in precipices where no cattle can be employed, and (both men and women,) to convey hay and corn to a great distance on their backs.

Among the advantages which the benevolence of strangers has given to Waldenses, and which they could not have procured for themselves, are an hospital and college. The hospital originated with William Prenderleath, Esq., during his residence in the valley, in the summer of 1821; who, in the following year, transmitted the sum of two hundred and seventy francs, being part of the sacramental collection of the English congregation at Rome, in furtherance of this important object. Having obtained their Sovereign's permission to solicit foreign contributions, the Waldenses were warmly supported by the King of Prussia, who authorized a collection to be made in the churches of his dominions, and contributed one hundred ducats from the privy purse. From various sources the sum collected amounted to more than a hundred thousand francs (four thousand pounds); and the King of Sardinia granted permission to purchase a house and land in the commune of La Torre, for the purposes of a hospital. Subscriptions continued to come in, and the committees who managed the subscriptions in England, Prussia, Holland, and elsewhere, prudently resolved to invest the capital in the public funds of the countries where such capital was raised, and to remit the interest by yearly or half-yearly payments to the hospital committee at La Torre. By this judicious arrangement, an hospital at La Torre, and a dispensary in the valley of St. Martin, enjoy the benefit of an income of 400% a year, in direct money from England, Holland, and Prussia, besides a rental amounting to about another 100%. The building is most advantageously situated with respect to the various valleys and villages; it consists of twelve rooms, each about sixteen feet square, and stands within an inclosure of about two acres. The site is somewhat elevated, perfectly detached from other buildings, and has the advantage of a fine supply of running water, besides two large pools or reservoirs.

The hospital has convenient accommodation for fourteen patients, and the dispensary at Pornaretto for eight; and the average expenditure, independent of the salaries of the physician, surgeon, ward-keeper, and matron, (together,

about a thousand francs a year,) is at the rate of one franc a day for each patient, including food, medicine, fuel, and wine—a fact which will enable us to draw some conclusions as to price of provisions in that part of Italy. In the course of the year about two hundred persons are admitted at the two houses. The complaints most common to the sufferers arise from old age, inflammation, accidents, rheumatism, and low fevers, brought on by poor living and cold.

The College, to which we slightly alluded above, was founded a few years ago, chiefly through the active exertions of Dr. Gilly; and Dr. Beattie found it to be making slow but steady progress. Since then, however, new edicts have been promulgated by the Sardinian government, apparently threatening this among many other of the Waldensian institutions.

When we consider that it is in defence of their ancient religious faith that the Waldenses have so courageously borne up against all the persecutions which have been levelled against them, we perhaps cannot better conclude our brief sketch than by quoting the following eloquent passage from the benevolent writer (Dr. Gilly) who has done so much to render Englishmen familiar with the simple mountaineers. "The primitive church! The one little lamp and its light, shining in the middle ages! The struggles of the first Reformers in Protestantism, in its uncompromising firmness and integrity!—What a crowd of ideas rush into our minds when we think of these! How we try to imagine the scenes, the characters, the events of antiquity, when Christianity was at its purest and simplest degree, then to trace its course through the dark ages of Romish usurpation, till it enters into clear day again, at the era of the Reformation!—Many of the images, which we conjure up when reading of the past, are realized before the eyes of those whose have opportunities of seeing the Waldensian church in her mountain-hold,—so wonderfully are the past and the present combined in her form, wasted though it is. In her we find the line carried up to a period sufficiently remote to connect her with the Apostolical succession. We trace the creed and the local habitation, if not the very name of this Alpine church, from age to age upwards, until we reach a date which satisfies us, that having early embraced the primitive faith, she has retained it amidst the surrounding darkness, as its only faithful depository."



LA TOUR OR LA TORRE, THE CHIEF WALDENSAN VILLAGE.